



HOUSING NETWORK  
OF RHODE ISLAND



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## **Rhode Islanders Need to Earn \$31.71/Hour to Afford Housing, New Report by the National Low Income Housing Coalition Says**

*Out of Reach* report underscores the significant disparity that exists between actual wages and the wages people need to earn to afford their rents nationwide

**WARWICK, RI** – A full-time worker in Rhode Island must earn \$31.71 per hour — or \$65,954 annually — to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment at today's Fair Market Rent (FMR), according to the newly released [Out of Reach 2025](#) report from the National Low Income Housing Coalition. The same report shows that the average R.I. renter earns only \$18.22 per hour, which could affordably support a monthly rent of no more than \$947.

The report's "Housing Wage" is an estimate of the hourly wage full-time workers must earn to afford a rental home at FMR without spending more than 30% of their incomes.

The *Out of Reach* report underscores the significant disparity that exists between actual wages and the wages people need to earn to afford their rents nationwide—one that reflects the broader trend of rising income inequality nationwide. The recent comprehensive federal budget reconciliation bill threatens to further erode income supports, exacerbating these inequities and making it even harder for low- and moderate-income households to stay housed.

Rhode Island is the 18th most expensive state in the country, based on the two-bedroom housing wage, behind Massachusetts (4th), Connecticut (11th), and New Hampshire (12th), but ahead of Vermont (21st) and Maine (26th). While R.I. may not be the most unaffordable in the region, Rhode Island's comparatively lower housing costs could attract higher wage earners from other states, driving up demand and contributing to rising housing costs.

According to the report, Rhode Islanders would have to work 85 hours a week at minimum wage to afford a two-bedroom apartment at FMR (which would require 2.1 full-time jobs); or 69 hours per week for a one-bedroom (requiring 1.7 full-time jobs).

"Rhode Island has taken steps in the right direction to raise the minimum wage over the past several years, but the *Out of Reach* report reveals that more work needs to be done to bridge the gap between wages and the rising cost of living," said Melina Lodge, Executive Director of the Housing Network of Rhode Island. "This report comes during a time of

deep uncertainty at the federal level, and a proposal for a 44% cut to essential housing programs—an action that would only exacerbate the crisis. To meaningfully address the crisis, the federal government must reject cuts to HUD, expand housing vouchers and both preserve and increase the supply of deeply affordable homes.”

In 2025, the national Housing Wage is \$33.63 per hour for a modest two-bedroom rental home and \$28.17 for a modest one-bedroom. Even in areas of the country with higher minimum wages, the reality remains grim: nowhere in the U.S. can a full-time minimum-wage worker afford a two-bedroom rental home at FMR.

“The *2024 Housing Fact Book* illustrates a similarly grim picture for Rhode Island’s renters,” said Brenda Clement, Executive Director of HousingWorks RI at Roger Williams University. “Based on 2023 average 2-bedroom apartment rents, a household earning the state’s median renter household income of \$45,560 could afford to rent in only one of Rhode Island’s 39 municipalities. With such a disconnect between wages and the cost of housing in the Ocean State, a safe, secure, and affordable home remains out of reach for many. We must continue to do all we can at the local, state, and federal levels to ensure Rhode Islanders, regardless of income, can live in healthy, quality homes in vibrant and thriving neighborhoods.”

It is a common myth that most minimum wage earners are high school students. Seventeen of the 25 most common occupations in the U.S. pay median wages less than the one and two-bedroom housing wages. Thirty-seven percent of the R.I.’s total households are renters.

At the root of the housing crisis is a structural issue: the private market cannot, on its own, provide an adequate supply of homes that are affordable for the lowest-income renters. Without public subsidies, the rents that ELI households can afford are too low to cover the development and operating costs of new housing.

Limited housing options mean that millions of low-income renters are forced to live in older, poorly maintained apartments, while spending large portions of their income just to keep a roof over their heads. With much of their income consumed by housing, little remains for life’s other necessities like food, childcare, transportation, or healthcare.

Sustained, long-term investments in affordable housing programs — locally and federally — are essential to ensure that the lowest-income renters can access and maintain safe, stable homes.

For additional information, visit: [nlihc.org/oor](https://nlihc.org/oor).

# RHODE ISLAND

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In **Rhode Island**, the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment is **\$1,649**. In order to afford this level of rent and utilities — without paying more than 30% of income on housing — a household must earn **\$5,496** monthly or **\$65,954** annually. Assuming a 40-hour work week, 52 weeks per year, this level of income translates into an hourly Housing Wage of:

**\$31.71**  
PER HOUR  
STATE HOUSING  
WAGE

## FACTS ABOUT RHODE ISLAND:

STATE FACTS	
Minimum Wage	<b>\$15.00</b>
Average Renter Wage	<b>\$18.22</b>
2-Bedroom Housing Wage	<b>\$31.71</b>
Number of Renter Households	<b>160,558</b>
Percent Renters	<b>37%</b>

<b>85</b> Work Hours Per Week At Minimum Wage To Afford a 2-Bedroom Rental Home (at FMR)	<b>69</b> Work Hours Per Week At Minimum Wage To Afford a 1-Bedroom Rental Home (at FMR)
<b>2.1</b> Number of Full-Time Jobs At Minimum Wage To Afford a 2-Bedroom Rental Home (at FMR)	<b>1.7</b> Number of Full-Time Jobs At Minimum Wage To Afford a 1-Bedroom Rental Home (at FMR)

MOST EXPENSIVE AREAS	HOUSING WAGE
Newport-Middleton-Portsmouth HMFA	<b>\$42.31</b>
Providence-Fall River HMFA	<b>\$31.04</b>
Westerly-Hopkinton-New Shoreham HMFA	<b>\$30.31</b>

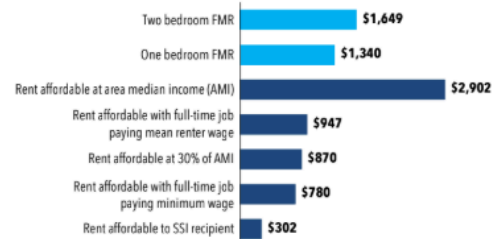
MSA = Metropolitan Statistical Area; HMFA = HUD Metro FMR Area.

\* Ranked from Highest to Lowest 2-Bedroom Housing Wage. Includes District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

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EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:01 am ET, Thursday, July 17, 2025



OUT OF REACH // 2025 222

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**National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC)** educates, organizes and advocates to ensure decent, affordable housing for everyone. Our goals are to preserve existing federally assisted homes and housing resources, expand the supply of low income housing, and establish housing stability as the primary purpose of federal low income housing policy.

**The Housing Network of Rhode Island (HNRI)** is a statewide association of 20 community development corporations and affordable housing developers working to build and preserve affordable homes and revitalize communities. Their wide array of activities—including real estate development, financial asset building, housing counseling, resident empowerment, and engagement, and much more—creates tangible community change and transforms the lives of Rhode Islanders.

**Homes RI** is a multi-sector coalition of organizations working together to increase the supply of safe, healthy and affordable homes throughout Rhode Island and is coordinated by the Housing Network of Rhode Island. HousingWorks RI is a partner of Homes RI.

**HousingWorks RI (HWRI)** at Roger Williams University is a research and policy organization focused on housing affordability indicators and their relation to the Social Determinants of Health (SDoH), in the Ocean State.